

China's Soft Power in Its Foreign Policy in Asia: *Ideas, Institutions, and Responsibilities*

Ying ZHOU*

アジアの外交政策における中国のソフト・パワーに関する考察
— アイデア・制度・責任の視点から —

周 英*

Abstract

This paper applies Joseph Nye's analytical framework on soft power to look at the China case, in order to provide an updated analysis of the country's power status in Asia. It aims to examine the potential of China's soft power through examining the style and substance of China's foreign policy in Asia as well as its implications for the ongoing Asian cooperation. In Nye's work, soft power is composed of cultural attractiveness, political values, and foreign policy. Putting China's soft power in the context of proceeding Asian cooperation, this paper will mainly examine China's soft power thinking as reflected in its foreign policy. Firstly, it examines how the Chinese government adopted the concept of soft power in its foreign policy and how they view its soft power. Then, it looks at how China builds its soft power through promoting ideas, engaging regional institutions, and assuming regional responsibilities in the context of Asia cooperation. Third, drawing from Chinese official government statements, elite journal articles in China and outside, media reportages, focused surveys and opinion polls, and consultations with some foreign professors who are specialized in China issues, this paper evaluates the potential of China's soft power through examining China's self-perception and the views of other Asians. This is followed by the analysis of the implications of China's soft power for the regional cooperation in Asia. It claims that China's soft power in its foreign policy is compatible with regional cooperation in Asia. The constraints and limits of China's soft power in the region and its future prospects will be revealed in the conclusion.

* Graduate School of Asia-Pacific Studies, Waseda University, Doctoral Degree Program;
早稲田大学大学院アジア太平洋研究科博士後期課程

I . Introduction

The immediate impact of China's rising is nowhere more manifest than in Asia where China's emergence has been felt most strongly due to the obvious geopolitical and economic factors and cultural and historical ties. Some scholars point out that besides the increase in its hard power like the GDP and the military budget, China's growing soft power has been pivotal in expanding the country's regional influence. They argued that besides its rapidly developing economic muscle, China, by advertising Chinese values, publicizing its traditional culture, and using its diplomatic skills, has risen as a great power in the Asian region.¹ Concepts of hard and soft power can be regarded as two poles on a continuum of power. They also imply different ideas, interactions, institutions, and responsibilities in foreign policy in the fields of politics, security, and economy.² Scholars who have concerned about power behavior tend to think that hard power strategies focus on military intervention, political isolation, coercive diplomacy, economic sanctions, imposition, and bullying others based on its stronger status. In contrast, soft power strategies emphasize, but are not limited to, peaceful means for conflict management, cooperation based on mutual benefits, active involvement in multilateralism, attractive diplomacy, cultural and educational exchange, and efficient campaigns of public relations over sensitive global issues in order to achieve common solutions and to achieve a win-win result.³

Since 1990s, there emerged a lot of new contents which were not traditionally in China's foreign policy, characterizing with co-optive behaviors in dealing with regional and global issues. China began to motivate cooperation in the region: its active presence in joining various regional institutions; its mediating role in moving the process of the de-nuclearisation in Korean Peninsula forward through the Six Party Talks; its adjustment and negotiations in territory disputes with neighboring countries; its proposals in designing East Asia cooperation framework; its supportive and

1 David Shambaugh, "China's Rise in Asia Need Not Be at American's Expense," in David Shambaugh, ed., *Power Shift: China and Asia's New Dynamics*, University of California Press, 2005, pp. 317-319. Robert G. Sutter, *China's Rise in Asia: Promises and Perils*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005, p. 201. David Lampton, *The Three Faces of Chinese Power: Might, Money, and Minds*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London University of California Press, 2008.

2 Christian Wagner, "From Hard Power to Soft Power? Ideas, Interactions, Institutions, and Images in India's South Asia Policy," Heidelberg Papers in South Asian and Comparative Politics, Working Paper, No. 26, March 2005, available at <www.hpsacp.umi-hd.de>.

3 Bates Gill and Yanzhong Huang: *Sources and Limits of China's Soft Power*, *Survival*, Vol. 48, No. 2, Summer 2006, pp. 17-36. Sheng Ding, "To Build a Harmonious World: China's Soft Power Wielding in the Global South," *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (2008), pp. 193-213. Zheng Yongnian and Zhang Chi, *Guoji Zhengzhizhong de Ruanliliang yiji dui Zhongguo Ruanliliang de Guancha*, *Shijie Jingji Yu Zhengzhi*, 2007(7), pp6-12. Huang Yanzhong & Sheng Ding, *Dragon's Underbelly: An Analysis of China's Soft Power*, East Asia, Winter 2006, Vol.23, No. 4, pp. 22-44. Xin Li & Verner Worm, *Building China's Soft Power for a Peaceful Rise*, Asia Research Centre, CBS, Copenhagen Discussion Papers, July 28, 2009. Alan Hunter, *Soft Power: China on the Global Stage*, *Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol.2, 2009, 373-398.

cooperative in non-traditional security areas, and its expanding exchanges at the societal level etc.⁴ These behaviors share one thing in common: using soft power-oriented strategies. Therefore, these initiatives are described as China's "smile diplomacy" "public diplomacy" "charm offensive" and "good neighbor diplomacy" etc.⁵

This paper emphasizes that China's recognition of soft power and its application to regional policies is an important factor in explaining the country's rapidly improving image and influence in Asia compared to its past. It goes to answer two important questions: why the substance and style of China's foreign policy help China improve its soft power in Asia since 1990s? What are the implications of China's soft power for the ongoing Asian cooperation?

As it will discuss in detail latter, Chinese officials and academic circle have actively engaged the concept of Nye's soft power and applied it to national policies. This paper finds that since 1990s China tries to resonate with its neighbors through promoting diplomatic ideas characterized with traditional culture; actively joins in regional institutions in an effect to set political agenda in Asian cooperation framework; and becomes more responsible in regional hot issues in order to build a benign image. However, as to the response towards China's soft power, this paper finds that there is a huge gap between China's self-perception and that of others'. On the diplomatic front of soft power, China gave herself higher credit than others'. Although there is the huge gap in perception, China's soft power has benefited to the proceeding regional cooperation.

II. Soft Power and Chinese Soft Power

Nye's Theory of Soft Power

Even though the term "comprehensive national power" was coined after the Cold War, the idea that national power is a combination of many different elements has been around for centuries.⁶ Alfred Thayer Mahan believed that state power consists of six components; Hans. J. Morgenthau classified nine components of power in his study; and Ray. S. Cline separated national power into five types. However, all of them divide components of state power into 'soft' and 'hard' categories.⁷ Hard power in-

4 David Shambaugh, "China Engages Asia: Reshaping the Regional Order," *International Security* 29, No. 3, Winter 2004/2005; Avery Goldstein, "The Diplomatic Face of China's Grand Strategy: A Rising Power's Emerging Choice" *The China Quarterly* 168, 2001, 835-64; Evan Medeiros and M. Taylor Fravel, "China's New Diplomacy" *Foreign Affairs* 82, no. 6, November/ December 2003.

5 H.H. Michael Hsiao and Alan Yang, "Soft Power Politics in the Asia Pacific: Chinese and Japanese Quests for Regional Leadership," *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, Vol. 8-3-09, February 17, 2009. Also see Joshua Kurlantzick, *China's Latest Export: Soft Power*. Los Angeles Times, Sep. 2, 2007.

6 Huang Shuofeng, *New Perspectives on Comprehensive National Power*, Press of Chinese Social Sciences, 1992, pp. 1-13.

7 *Ibid.*, pp. 9-12.

cludes force, coercion and direct manifestation to others in order to achieve the power holder's goal. Soft power involves indirect influence and ability to shape the preferences of others by attraction or non-imposition. In the words of Joseph Nye, soft power is the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payment; it emanates from three resources: its culture (in places where it is attractive to others), its political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad), and its foreign policies (when they are seen as legitimate and having moral authority).⁸ In his subsequent writings, Nye made a little revision and has acknowledged that a successful economy, international image, and sometimes military force can contribute to soft power.⁹ In the power stratum, the most probable soft power resource is those intangible things as Nye claimed above. While the tangible things like economy and military can also generate soft power depending upon their behavior. In Nye's concept, soft power is associated with co-optive behavior rather than coercive behavior. There are two models of how soft power works—direct and indirect. Leaders may be directly attracted and persuaded by the benignity, competence or charisma of other leaders. Friendships sometimes matter in world politics, and elite networks often play an important role. The indirect way is a two-step model in which publics and third parties are influenced, and they in turn affect the leaders of other countries. In this case, soft power has an important indirect effect by creating an enabling environment. Alternatively, if an actor or action is perceived as repulsive, it creates a disabling environment.¹⁰ Nye's soft power model is context-based. A favorable international context is essential for the exercise of soft power. As to the measurement of soft power, the intangibility of soft power resources makes it a tricky enterprise. According to Nye, whether a particular asset is a soft power resource that produces attraction can be measured by asking people through polls or focus groups. Whether that attraction in turn produces desired policy outcomes has to be judged in particular cases.¹¹

Soft power is mobilizing cooperation from others without threat or payments. Firstly, soft power stems from a state's positive image in the eyes of others expressed in the attractiveness of its political ideas, culture and foreign policies. Therefore, it entails a state presenting a positive image of it and behaving in a way other countries deem benevolent. Second, soft power shapes others' preferences and structures the situation; this will make the state take others' preferences and interests into account. Sometimes a soft power-wielding actor exercises self-restraints in actions and makes

8 Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, New York: Public Affairs, 2005, p.11.

9 Joseph S. Nye, "Think Again: Soft Power," *Foreign Policy*, Web Exclusive, Feb 2006, Joseph S. Nye, "The Rise of China's Soft Power," *PKU News*, Dec. 2007, <<http://ennews.pku.edu.cn/news.php?s=197954479>>

10 Joseph S. Nye, "Restoring America's Reputation in the World and Why It Matters," <<http://mountainrunner.us/2010/03/nye.html>>

11 Joseph.S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, New York: Public Affairs, 2005, p. 6.

compromises and adaptations.¹² Therefore, the state may adopt policies that have a mutually beneficial or even altruistic nature.

Chinese soft power-----beyond Nye's conceptualization

The first public discussion of soft power in China was “*Culture as National Soft Power*” an article written in 1993 by Wang Huning, now a member of the CCP Central Committee Secretariat.¹³ It is only in recent years that Chinese officials and academicians have paid much attention to the idea of soft power and its relevance to China's foreign strategy,¹⁴ stimulated by the debate over how to formulate domestic and foreign policies necessary for comprehensive national power. Although scholars and policymakers in China hold major differences of opinion regarding the fundamental components of comprehensive national power, they have reached consensus in dividing those components into ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ power.¹⁵ Chinese interest in soft power is likely to have been derived from the recognition that hard power alone is insufficient for China to be a great power. Chinese officials’ view on soft power resources is mainly from its culture but come to realize that soft power is driven from foreign policy as well. President Hu Jintao called for increasing China's soft power through cultural development for reasons of national cohesion and overall national strength.¹⁶ In the summer of 2009, in China's 11th Ambassadorial conference, Hu urged diplomatic envoys and foreign policy officials to make efforts to give China “more influential power in politics, more competitiveness in the economic field, more affinity in its image,” and “more appealing force in morality.”¹⁷ The message was clear: Beijing's discourses on soft power are not limited within the scope of culture. As analysts pointed out that Hu's statement was notable for addressing the importance of developing the political and moral sides of soft power as well.¹⁸ According to Peng Fuchun, a National People's Congress deputy, “we should never underestimate the importance of building soft power as economic miracle is only one side of China's rising in the world

12 Wanfa Zhang, Tapping Soft Power: Managing China's “Peaceful Rise” and the implications for the World, p. 109-131 and Han Lheem, “China's New Approach to North Korean Nuclear Issue: An Economic Interdependence,” in Sujian Guo and Shiping Hua, eds., *New Dimensions of Chinese Foreign Policy*, Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007.

13 Wang Huning, Culture as national Soft power, *Journal of Fudan University*, March 1993.

14 Li Mingjiang, China debates Soft Power, *Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 2, 2008, pp. 287-308.

15 Yan Xuetong, “The Rise of China and Its Power Status,” *Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 1(2006), pp. 5-33.

16 “Hu Jintao calls for Enhancing Soft Power of Chinese Culture,” *Xinhua*, October 15, 2007, < http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2007-10/15/content_6883748.htm>

17 “Hu Jintao, Wen Jiabao Give Speeches at the 11th Ambassadorial Conference,” July 20, 2009. <http://www.gov.cn/ldhd/2009-07/20/content_1370171.htm>

18 Bonnie Glaser and Benjamin Dooley, “China's 11th Ambassadorial Conference Signals Continuity and Change in Foreign Policy,” *China Brief*, Vol. 9, No. 22, November 4, 2009, pp. 8-12.

area.”¹⁹ In light of this, China is expanding its use of cultural as well as diplomatic tools to increase its appeal across the world. Some scholar stated, “China has to choose soft power as it seeks the ‘peaceful rise’ strategy and harmonious world. While Jiang Zemin began to pay more attention to soft power and practiced China’s soft power diplomacy in a globalizing world, especially in Southeast Asia, it was Hu Jintao, at the 2005 UN summit, who officially incorporated soft power as an integral part of his vision and strategy of building a harmonious world.”²⁰

Academic society’s view on soft power mainly follow Nye’s three-source model while some others have tried to broaden the content of soft power. For instance, Men Honghua, a noted scholar in China’s Central Party School, adds another two pillars to Nye’s original formula based on the context of China. The two pillars are the “Chinese development model” and the international image.²¹ Guo Shuyong, a professor at Shanghai Jiaotong University, argues that China’s soft power is expressed in full integration and active participation in international system. Internationalism is China’s soft power.²² There are some other researchers illustrated, due to China’s vast market and business potential, the nation offers the world enormous opportunities for wealth generation. Few countries would not be lured to such an economic magnet. Therefore, economic temptation should be in China’s soft power currency.²³ A different thing merit attention is that officials and academics in China have extended soft power in the domestic context. The domestic context to which numerous Chinese analysts frequently refer includes: national cohesion, citizen quality, credibility, domestic political institution-building, social justice, social morality, good governance, and educational quality etc.²⁴

III. China and Asia

Dynamics of Building Soft Power in Asia

China builds its soft power in varying regions with various reasons and in vari-

19 “Soft Power: A New Focus at China’s Two Sessions, National People’s Congress, People’s Republic of China,” URL: www.npc.gov.cn.

20 Samuel S. Kim, “China and Globalization: Confronting Myriad Challenges and Opportunities,” *Asian Perspective*, Vol. 33, No. 3, 2009, pp. 41-80.

21 Meng Honghua, “Zhongguo Ruanshili Pinggu Baogao I” (Assessment and report of China’s soft power), *Guoji Guancha* (International Observer), No. 2, 2007, pp. 15-26.

22 Guo Shuyong, *Xinguojizhuyi Yu Zhongguo Ruanshili Waijiao*, in Men honghua edited *China’s Soft Power Strategy*, Zhenjiang People Press, Dec, 2007, pp205-219.

23 Xin Li and Verner Worm, “Building China’s Soft Power for a Peaceful Rise,” *Asia Research Centre, CBS, Copenhagen Discussion Papers*, July 28, 2009.

24 Yu Keping, *Zhongguo Moshi: Jingyan Yu Jianjie*, (The China Model: Experience and Lessons) in Yu Keping edited, *Zhongguo Moshi yu Beijing Gongshi* (the Chinese Model and Beijing Consensus—Beyond the Washington Consensus), Beijing: Shehui Kexue Chubanshe, 2006, p.9. Jiang Yingzhou and Ye Juanli, *Review on Researches of National Soft Power*, *Journal of Wuhan University (Philosophy and Social Sciences)*, No. 62. Pang Zhongying, *Fazhan Zhongguo Ruanshili*, *Liaowang* 1, January 2006. P.63.

ous forms. When it comes to Asia, in order to cultivate a lasting favorable environment to facilitate its continuous economic growth China has to choose the soft power oriented strategy. Soft power initially resonated with traditional Chinese thinking, especially in East Asia in which countries were heavily influenced by Chinese traditional culture including language and philosophies. The Confucius tradition has always been the best way to get people to do what you want, to affect their thinking.²⁵ Confucianism emphasizes cultivating a “soft” relationship (*huairou*) with neighboring areas: “If remote people are rebellious, our civil culture is to be cultivated to attract them to our virtues; and when they have been attracted, they must be made contented and tranquil.”²⁶ The Confucian thinking about the virtue of moral power has resonated with one of China’s best known strategists, Zhu Gelang (AD 181-234), who argued that in subduing a peripheral rebellion, “It is better to win hearts and minds than to attack towns and cities” (*gongxin weishang, gongcheng weixia*).²⁷ The proof of the connections between the idea of soft power and China’s ancient culture can be found in Johnston’s summary about the characteristics of China’s strategic culture.²⁸

Asia is a region embedded with China’s crucial foreign policy goals. To be a regional great power is the precondition to becoming a world-level power.²⁹ However, three decades of rapid economic growth and military modernization have caused many concerns in the neighboring countries as well as in western countries. Some people use the “China threat” charge and want to “contain” China’s rise. In this sense, China has to do something for “a peaceful and conducive external environment in which China can grow stably during the current important period of strategic opportunity.”³⁰ Hence, China’s soft power in Asia is useful in mitigating the “China threat” theory, earning the understanding of the international community, and garnering support for China’s peaceful development. Meanwhile, there is no evidence to show that China will reduce its military expenditures; hard power has occasionally been used in domestic or foreign policy, whether over the Taiwan Strait or some territorial disputes with China’s neighbors. In this sense, some observers argue that the real goal of increasing China’s soft power is to earn the legitimacy for a serious build-up of its hard power.³¹ A Chinese scholar said, “We used to hide our power—deny our power. But

25 Consultation with Professor Tsuneo Akaha and David M. Lampton, USA, January, 2010.

26 Confucius, *Analects* in J. Legge, trans., *The Four Books*, Hong Kong: Wei Tung Book Co., 1971, p. 143.

27 Luo Guanzhong, *Sanguo yanyi* (*Romance of the Three Kingdoms*), Jinan: Shandong Renmin Chubanshe, 1980, p. 748.

28 Johnston

29 Meng Honghua, “Report on the Analysis of China’s Soft Power, Part II,” *International Observer*, 2007, No. 3, pp. 37-46.

30 Xin Li and Verner Worm, “Building China’s Soft Power for a Peaceful Rise,” *Asia Research Centre, CBS, Copenhagen Discussion Papers*, July 28, 2009, pp. 1-27.

31 Interview with a Chinese official who works in the publicity department.

then this became increasingly impossible as our strength increased.....We had to find ways to reassure people, use power constructively, because our power became increasingly undeniable.”³² Soft power can be very useful to get its neighbors to accept China’s rise.

As regional hostilities have eased and interdependencies have grown, Asians (and analysts of Asia) have begun to focus on a new level of interaction: soft power. Regional organizations’ ongoing activities open up greater opportunities for the respective member countries to project their power through which they can try to pursue their national interests. Soft power begins with setting the agenda and shaping the preferences of others, and creating a regional architecture is the big deal in today’s Asia. China is not alone in getting interested in soft power; the same discourses and exercises can be found in Japan, South Korea, the US, and even Taiwan.³³ For the main actors in the region, soft power opens up new approaches to struggle for a more influential role or even leadership in the region. China sees the importance of regional integration as a means to stabilize its surrounding environment, to develop its economy and to deal with transnational problems.

China’s Asian Policy

China’s fundamental interests lie in Asia, the only region of the world in which all aspects of China’s national interests, security, economic, and political, are present. Therefore, the way that China pursues the objectives of its regional strategy, an integrated approach that simultaneously pursues security, economic, and political interests, can not be easily applied to any other region (say, Africa or Europe).³⁴ Meanwhile, Asia is the region with the world’s highest concentration of major power interactions. Accordingly, China’s regional strategy has to cultivate a favorable environment and maintain at least a workable relationship with all the major powers in the region. The 17th Congress Report of the Chinese Communist Party states, “for our neighboring countries, we will continue to follow the foreign policy of friendship and partnership, strengthen good-neighborly relations and practical cooperation with them, and energetically engage in regional cooperation in order to jointly create a peaceful, stable re-

32 See David Lampton, *The Three Faces of Chinese Power: Might, Money, and Minds*, University of California Press, 2008, p. 61.

33 See, for example, Tsuneo Akaha, “Japan’s Soft Power-Hard Power Balancing Act,” David Arase and Tsuneo Akaha, eds., *The US-Japan Alliance: Balancing Soft and Hard Power in East Asia*, London: Routledge, 2010; Sook-Jong Lee, “South Korea’s Soft Power Diplomacy,” EAI Issue Briefing No. MASI June, 2009, pp. 1-8; Hongying Wang and Yeh-Chung Lu, “The conception of Soft Power and Its Policy Implications: A Comparative Study of China and Taiwan,” *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol. 17, No. 56, August 2008, pp. 425-447; Myunghee Kim, “Evaluating US Soft Power in Asia: Military, Economic and Sociopolitical Relationship between Asia and the US”, *Contemporary Politics*, Vol. 15, No. 3, September 2009, pp. 337-353.

34 David Shambaugh, “China’s Rise in Asia Need Not Be at American’s Expense,” in David Shambaugh, ed., *Power Shift: China and Asia’s New Dynamics*, University of California Press, 2005, pp. 317-319.

gional environment featuring equality, mutual trust and win-win cooperation.”³⁵ China wants to assure Asia that a rising China will be a peaceful and positive force to promote peace and development in the region. As China has already viewed itself as an integral part of Asia, China thinks its rise is part of the rising Asia.

China has no official recorded Asian policy, but we need to look at its grand foreign policy strategy and observe how China handles its international relations within the region. Currently, China’s Asia policy is summarized as “Pursuing good neighborly relations and partnership with neighbors” and “focusing a harmonious, secure and prosperous neighborly environment.”³⁶ Chinese leaders and diplomats use three Chinese words to describe the policy: making the regional peaceful and secure (anlin), pursuit of regional common development or win-win situation (fulin), good neighborliness and friendship (mulin). In an effort to allay regional fears of China’s economic, political, and military clout, Chinese leaders use the guidelines of “do well to our neighbors, treat our neighbors as partners” (yulin weishan, yilin weiban).³⁷

IV. Asian Cooperation as a Context for Chinese Soft Power Projection

Whether soft power produces behavior will depend on the international context and the capability of power resources converting. Contextual variables include, but are not limited to, geographic proximity, foreign policy of other countries, and distribution of international power etc. A favorable international context is essential for the exercise of soft power.

The financial crises in 1997 witnessed Asians’ shifting attitudes toward China owing to its responsible behavior of not devaluing its currency. Also, this year provides opportunities to mark China’s soft power emergence in Asia. As analyst said, “Bilaterally and multilaterally, Beijing’s diplomacy has been increasingly adept and nuanced, earning praise around the region. As a result, most nations in the region now see China as a good neighbor, a constructive partner, a careful listener, and a non-threatening regional power. A lot of negative voices about China are muted today.”³⁸ According to a recent BBC World Service poll, China’s influence on the world is viewed as positive by a majority or plurality of citizens in 14 of the 22 countries surveyed.³⁹ And China enjoys a relatively popular image in its neighbors, especially in

35 “Hu Jintao Calls for Enhancing Soft Power of Chinese Culture”, Xinhua, October 15, 2007. <<http://english.cpcnnews.cn/92243/6283135.html>, accessed November 1, 2007.>

36 See the full text of President Hu Jintao’s keynote speech at the 17th CCP National Party Congress published by China Daily, October 25, 2007.

37 The website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/ziliao/tytj/t24782.htm>.

38 David Shambaugh, “China Engages: Reshaping the Regional Order,” *International Security*, Vol. 29, No. 3 2004, pp. 64-99.

39 The poll of 22,953 people in 22 countries was conducted for the BBC World Service by the polling organization GlobeScan, together with the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) at the University of

Southeast Asia. As Beijing's influence continues to grow, many Southeast Asian countries look to China for regional leadership or, at a minimum, take into account China's interests and concerns in their decision-making process.⁴⁰

The monetary crisis in the late 1990s also aroused the first wave of regional cooperation and regional integration in East Asia. In this new order, Asians are becoming increasingly interactive and enmeshed in a growing web of interdependence. Cooperation has been taken as the preferable choice for each player in Asia. Since the crisis, China has become a firm supporter of regional integration in East Asia and other parts of Asia. "China wants to re-establish or transform its relationship with Asia through the practice of regionalism. And for other Asian countries, creating a framework for regional integration enhances their security by embedding a rising China in a web of dialogues and agreements even if these efforts exclude the United States."⁴¹ Japan is also active in regional cooperation. Not only the initiative of setting up the Asian Monetary Fund (unfortunately it failed because of the US objection), but also the "Tokyo Declaration" signed by Japan and ASEAN in 2003 demonstrated Japan's goal of constructing a greater East Asia Community. Since Hatoyama assumed the office as the prime minister, the East Asia Community has emerged in his policy agenda. South Korea is also proactive in regional cooperation, as seen in its initiative to release the Joint Statement on East Asia Cooperation in 2003 and its effort to hold the informal trilateral committee (China, Japan, and South Korea) to study, plan, coordinate, and monitor the cooperation.

The US factor can never be ignored in Asia. Three key components, military, economic and sociopolitical, characterize the United States' overarching influence in the global system, particularly in Asia.⁴² The US has kept close security ties with Japan, South Korea and Thailand. The export-oriented economic development model in Asia functioned as a conduit for US economic influence in Asia. With regards to the sociopolitical influence, for the sake of its global interests the United States has always been engaged and will continue to be engaged in Asian affairs ranging from non-conventional security issues to domestic governance and human rights. However, the dictatorial posture taken by the IMF and the slow reaction to the Asian financial crisis overshadowed the United States' credibility and reputation in the region. Moreover,

Maryland. The survey was completed in most of the countries in March 5, 2005. More information is available at <http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/articles/views_on_countriesregions_bt/116.php?nid=&id=&pnt=116&lb=btvoc>

40 David Shambaugh, "Beijing charms its neighbors", May 14, 2005, <<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/05/13/opinion/13iht-edshambaugh.html>>

41 Ellen L. Frost, James J. Przystup, and Phillip C. Saunders, "China's Rising Influence in Asia: Implications for U.S. Policy," Strategic Forum, April 2008. No. 231, pp. 1-8.

42 Myunghee Kim, "Evaluating US Soft Power in Asia: Military, Economic and Sociopolitical Relationships between Asia and the United States," Contemporary Politics, Vol. 15, No. 3, September 2009, pp. 337-353.

the heavy-handed policies of the United States following the September 11 event seem to have alienated many states in the region, to the detriment of American soft power. Positive opinion of the US has dropped in East Asia during the early years of this century.⁴³ What is more important, arguments are being put forth by East Asians that the region needs to develop a regional identity and shared values (Asian values) to continuously deepen the integration.⁴⁴ The lack of US cultural compatibility with Asian countries would limit its role in the process of regional cooperation which is more and more extending to the society level. This international context might facilitate China's soft power projecting.

V. China's Soft Power Projection in Its Foreign Policy

As Nye argues, compared to a country's cultural attractiveness and political values, the values expressed through the substance and style of foreign policy are a more direct vehicle of developing soft power.⁴⁵ Soft power is to achieve one's policy goals through affecting other policy makers. Foreign policy is the relatively direct tool comparing to culture and values. As he further argues, "All three resources are important, but policy substance and style are both the most volatile and the most susceptible to government control; while the international attractiveness of a state's culture and values is largely shaped by non-state actors."⁴⁶ In this sense, in terms of soft power resources, the author argues that foreign policy is China's main soft power resource in the context of Asian cooperation. There are two reasons: firstly, governments remain the key actor in Asian affairs and in the foreign relations of the region.⁴⁷ Secondly, China's foreign policy shows much more flexibilities in this region. Since the 1990s there is growing evidences illustrated that China's foreign policy is following a strategy prioritizing the management of soft power.⁴⁸ The following section will examine the substance and style of China's foreign policy in Asia where China projects its soft power with co-optive behaviors.

43 Gideon Rachman, "The Hard Evidence That China's Soft Power Policy is Working," *Financial Times*, February 19, 2007.

44 Young Nam Cho and Jong Ho Jeong: *China Soft Power: discussion, resources, and prospects*, Asia Survey, Vol. XLVIII, No.3. May-June 2008.

45 Joseph.S. Nye, "Soft Power and Leadership," *Compass: A Journal of Leadership*, Spring, pp. 28-31.

46 Joseph.S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, Public Affairs New York, 2005, p. 68. Also see Matthew Kroenig, Melissa McAdam, and Steven Weber, *Taking Soft Power Seriously*, February 23, 2009 Word count: 15,161, Draft date: February 23, 2009, pp. 1-59.

47 Robert Sutter, "China's Rise in Asia: Promise, Prospects, and Implications for the US", *Asia-Pacific Centre for Security Studies*, February 2005, pp.1-11.

48 David Shambaugh, "China Engages Asia: Reshaping the Regional Order," *International Security* 29, no. 3 Winter 2004/2005; Avery Goldstein, "The Diplomatic Face of China's Grand Strategy: A Rising Power's Emerging Choice" *The China Quarterly* 168, 2001: 835-64; Evan Medeiros and M. Taylor Fravel, "China's New Diplomacy," *Foreign Affairs* 82, no. 6, November/December 2003; Rosemary Foot, "China's Regional Activism: Leadership, Leverage, and Protection," *Global Change, Peace & Security* 17, no. 2 June 2005.

Ideas: the Conceptual Basis of China's Soft Power-based Asian Policy

If states are to shape the preferences of an international audience, or a target, then they must be able to interact with that target in an international marketplace of ideas.⁴⁹ Foreign policy produces soft power when it promotes broadly shared values or ideas. China appears to be increasingly able to promote its ideas with the embodiment of its traditional culture. It aims to create group norms with which individual Asian countries wish to identify. Keenly aware of the damage caused by the radicalism under Mao and the terrible image-damaging event in 1989, China has worked hard through official statements and diplomatic practice to promote a benign image as a new great power with no aggressive intentions. In 1996, the Foreign Ministry suggested that the "New Security Concept," based on mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and coordination, be adopted for the Asia Pacific Region. It was a reworking of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence that were the mainstay of moderate and accommodating phases in Chinese foreign policy for five decades. In 1997, Foreign Minister Qian Qichen made a formal proposal to the ASEAN Regional Forum. Contrary to the traditional security concept, this new idea advocates seeking security through cooperation rather than competition, comprehensive security, cooperative security and common security. The approach, by virtue of its non-controversial and conciliatory features, has widespread appeal globally and resonates with its Asian target.⁵⁰

To counter the "China threat" theory, China has looked to a policy of "peaceful rise" or "peaceful development," aimed at assuring others that a peaceful rather than unstable international environment is the best guarantee for China's development and its interests and that, therefore, China has no intention to challenge the current world order, which is not in China's interest, instead it is to preserve the status quo. This idea demonstrates Beijing's avowed efforts to develop good neighborly relations, to take global responsibility, and to ease the anxiety of other countries. The new policy reveals how China will use its rising power and influence to seek the settlement of regional problems such as the nuclear program in the Korean Peninsula and the disputes in the South China Sea. In the words of the main architect of this theory, "while seeking a peaceful international environment to ensure our development, we are safeguarding world peace through our own development."⁵¹ The doctrine emphasizes the importance of soft power and is based on the premise that good relations with its neighbors will enhance rather than reduce its overall national power.⁵² It certainly

49 Matthew Kroenig, Melissa McAdam, and Steven Weber, "Taking Soft Power Seriously", February 23, 2009
Word count: 15,161, Draft date: February 23, 2009, pp. 1-59.

50 David Lampton, *The Three Faces of Chinese Power, Might, Money, and Minds*, p. 143.

51 The website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of PRC, <<http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/gxh/tyb/>>

52 Barbara Onnis, "Monopoly Broken-Again? The Emergence of China's Alternative Soft Power," Sixth, Pan-European Conference (SGIR/ECPR), Turin, September 12-15, 2007, pp. 1-21.

puts a new face on Chinese foreign policy in that some international public opinion data suggest that this posture confers more legitimacy on the PRC than many Americans perceive or wish to concede.⁵³ Most recently, since it was officially presented by the Chinese president at the United Nations summit in 2005, the term “harmonious world” has become one of the most popular lexicons for talking about Beijing’s ideal of international order in the age of China’s rise. The declaration of harmonious world is an important instance of China’s soft power projection. As some scholar said, a foreign policy informed by the ideal of Grand Harmony that makes room for cultural difference and legitimate national self-interest is good for China and may also enhance China’s soft power abroad.⁵⁴ This idea is not only consistent with China’s long-held principle of peaceful coexistence but it also offers the world a brighter new world order that is China’s own vision on global order. As one scholar points out that the principle of a harmonious world is anchored in twin triangulations. First, there is a geopolitical triangulation of a nation (China), a region (Asia), and a world. The logic here is that the harmonious world is the ultimate goal of the nation, with the harmonious region serving as a connector between the two. Second, there is a functional triangulation of common development, common security, and common prosperity with lasting peace.⁵⁵

Beijing not only promotes those diplomatic ideas but it is also concerned about the response of the outside world. When some scholars compared China’s use of the concept of “rise” to the rise of Germany and Japan, Beijing immediately replaced the term with “peaceful development.” Another phenomenon is that most of those ideas have been initiated in the context of Asian affairs in which China shares cultural similarity with others. As Nye said, culture is more likely to attract people and produce soft power in situations where cultures are somewhat similar rather than widely dissimilar.⁵⁶ In this sense, one of the conditions that favor the projection of soft power is cultural similarity. Drawn on the soft power ideas from the traditional Chinese ideology, Beijing aims to resonate with its neighbors through using the cultural similarities featured with Confucianism in this normative field.

Institutions——China’s Multilateral Cooperation in Asia

Because the currency of soft power is attraction, it is often easier to generate and

53 David Lampton, *The Three Faces of Chinese Power, Might, Money, and Minds*, p. 144.

54 Daniel A. Bell, *China’s New Confucianism: Politics and Everyday Life in a Changing Society*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008, p. 27.

55 Samuel S. Kim, “China and Globalization: Confronting Myriad Challenges and Opportunities,” *Asian Perspective*, Vol. 33, No. 3, 2009, pp. 41-80.

56 Joseph S. Nye, *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World’s Only Superpower Cannot Go it Alone*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2002, pp15-16.

wield it in a multilateral context.⁵⁷ China's doctrines in foreign policy underline multilateral cooperation through institutions and regional organizations. Many studies have shown that the Chinese government, in its conduct of diplomacy, has moved from the position of staunchly advocating state sovereignty, non-interference, and bilateral relationship to embracing cooperative multilateralism.⁵⁸ China's growing material power allows it to gain more self-confidence and thereby participate in regional multilateral mechanisms to shape the rules of international relations in its favor.⁵⁹ Although still nascent and with a long way to go before achieving the level of regional cooperation that exists in Europe, regional organizations and dialogues have nonetheless sprouted in Asia in recent years. China shares membership in almost all of those regional institutions, forums and track II groups.⁶⁰ In addition to enjoying the membership in those institutions, Beijing also tries to set the political agenda to frame others' preferences. Within the framework of multilateralism, Beijing tries to engage, to make decisions, to accommodate, and to compromise. Let us see how China pursues its soft power-based policy in ASEAN+3.

ASEAN+3 started as an informal leaders' meeting in December 1997; when the ASEAN+3 process was institutionalized in 1999, Beijing regularized its participation and always sends its premier (Zhu Rongji from 1999 to 2002 and Wen Jiabao since 2003) to the annual summit. Until November 2005, Beijing was involved in all 14 mechanisms established at the ministerial level. There are currently 48 dialogue mechanisms under the 10+3 process, coordinating 16 areas of cooperation, which include economics, finance, foreign affairs, politics, security, labor, health, tourism, environment, agriculture, forestry, social welfare, energy, transnational crime, information and communications technology (ICT) and youth affairs.⁶¹ Beijing engaged all of them. Fundamentally, soft power is not just being well-liked; it is the ability to set the political agenda in a way that sets the preferences of others.⁶² Therefore, China also plays an important role in setting the agenda. The Chinese government offered to organize a Network of East Asian Think Tanks (NEAT) within the ASEAN+3 framework and

57 Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, p.63.

58 Jane Perlez, "China Shoring up Image as Asian Superpower," *International Herald Tribune*, December 2, 2004; Evan Medeiros and R. Taylor Fravel, "China's New Diplomacy," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 82, No. 6, November/December 2003, pp.22-35; and David C. Kang, "Getting Asia Wrong: The Need for New Analytical Frameworks," *International Security*, Vol. 27, No. 4, Spring 2003, pp. 57-85.

59 Injoo Sohn, "Learning to Co-operate: China's Multilateral Approach to Asian Financial Co-operation," *The China Quarterly*, 2008, pp. 309-326.

60 David Shambaugh, "China Engages: Reshaping the Regional Order," *International Security*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (2004), pp. 64-99.

61 Chien-Peng Chung, "China's Approaches to the Institutionalization of Regional Multilateralism," *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol. 17, No. 57, November 2008, pp. 747-764.

62 Joseph Nye, "The Changing Nature of World Power," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 105, No. 2, 1990, pp. 177-192.

this idea was endorsed by the 13 leaders. NEAT is expected to provide ideas and recommendations for the 13 Asian governments to deliberate. The East Asian Summit has been one of the developments in that regard. At the ASEAN+3 summit in 2002, China suggested that the ASEAN+3 processes be expanded to include regional political and security issues such as combating terrorism and other transnational crime.⁶³ At the 8th Leadership Meeting of ASEAN+3, Premier Wen Jiabao raised the basic principle of equality, mutual trust and win-win cooperation to guide the long-term development of bilateral ties and put forward 10 initiatives on bilateral cooperation in the political, economic and trade, security, cultural and other fields. In order to accommodate to these regional mechanisms, Beijing has also tried to build its domestic mechanisms to facilitate its participation in regional cooperation. It was in 2004 that the Chinese government decided to set up a coordinative mechanism at the national level for Asian regional cooperation. The mechanism involved 22 ministries and commissions and State Councilor Tang Jiaxuan assumed the role of chairing this new coordinative mechanism. China's efforts to improve its ties with ASEAN are not merely serving for its own national interests. They represent, in some cases, fundamental compromises that China had chosen to make in limiting its own sovereignty interests for the sake of engagement in multilateral frameworks and pursuit of greater regional interdependence.⁶⁴ Within the regional arrangements, China conforms to the established rules and norms very well. China lets the ASEAN remain in the driver's seat of the EAS process, welcoming the membership criteria that the ASEAN has set for recruiting new members. Running the risk of being balanced by non-East Asia countries, China showed its respect and accepted the decisions ASEAN made to involve new participants. Although it hoped to host the first EAS, given the willingness of ASEAN countries, Beijing did not insist on its own offer.

Responsibilities: to build a benign image

With China's ever-growing power, its desire and capability to assume various regional responsibilities are strengthened. In order to be a good citizen in the region, China's recipe for building a benign image as a responsible power has three main ingredient: managing regional conflicts, giving generous assistance, and improving the key bilateral ties within the region.

A good example of Beijing's responsible behavior is management of the North Korean nuclear crisis and facilitation of a stable environment. As a Chinese scholar

63 "Joint Communiqué of the First ASEAN Plus Three Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime (AMMTCþ3) Bangkok, 10 January 2004," <<http://www.aseansec.org/15645.htm>>

64 Amitav Acharya, "China's Charm Offensive in Southeast Asia," International Herald Tribune, November 8-9, 2003.

wrote, "Never in the diplomatic history of the PRC has the country been so deeply or extensively involved in a controversial regional issue to which it was not a direct party."⁶⁵ The Chinese government assumed an unprecedented leadership role in resolving the crisis due to the hostile interactions between the United States and North Korea. China has been conducting an intensive campaign of shuttle diplomacy, sending envoys back and forth between Asian capitals, sponsoring a preliminary trilateral (Chinese, North Korean, and U.S.) meeting and hosting subsequent rounds of the Six Party Talk.⁶⁶ Achievements have been obtained at certain stages of those talks. At the fourth round of talks in 2005, a common goal of denuclearization was reached—a triumph for the Chinese negotiators who held the pen in the drafting of the agreement and obtained the critical compromises from the parties. Although China's approach cannot deliver a rapid end to Pyongyang's weapons program, it still tries to be an integral component of any strategy with a chance of reducing the threat of a nuclear North Korea. No other country had the interest and the political position in North Korea to facilitate and mediate the negotiations.⁶⁷ By now, China has won considerable regard in Washington, Seoul and Tokyo. The Six-Party Talks may be the nascent shape of a future regional security forum. The process of completely solving the North Korean nuclear crisis and even the issue of Korean unification may take decades and require a more feasible institutional mechanism, but consultations within the current framework will make for a future, broader security framework. China will become a key mediator, designer, and agenda-setter of this new security framework in East Asia.

Another indicator demonstrating China's responsible behavior is its generous aid in the region. China's soft power has begun to be under great spotlight driven by the financial crisis in 1997. In this event, Beijing resisted intense pressure to devalue the currency to remain competitive. Moreover, China helped its reputation by offering a total of US\$4 billion in bailout packages to Thailand, South Korea and Indonesia. This event created the impression of the PRC as a safe haven in Asia amidst the economic chaos. China has become an important source of infrastructure financing in Southeast Asia. While China is not counted as a major regional provider of ODA as defined by the OECD, some reports and observations suggest that the PRC is one of the largest sources of economic assistance in Southeast Asia. For example, in 2002, China's aid to Indonesia was double that of the United States. In 2006, China's aid to the Philippines was four times that of the United States, while the amount to Laos was three times

65 Zhu Feng, "China's Policy on the North Korean Nuclear Issue," *China Strategy*, Vol. 3, July 20, 2004, pp.27-42

66 John S. Park, "Inside Multilateralism: The Six-Party Talks," *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 4, pp. 75-91.

67 Han Lheem, "China's New Approach to North Korean Nuclear Issue: An Economic Interdependence," Sujian Guo& Shiping Hua, eds., *New Dimensions of Chinese Foreign Policy*, Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007.

the U.S. aid.⁶⁸ China not only offers aid in the economic field but also for humanitarian reasons. In the disaster relief activities for the region-the Tsunami disaster relief in 2005 and the Indonesia earthquake assistance in 2006-China made disproportionately large donations to the countries concerned relative to its own economic capability. In all these cases, Beijing was committed to presenting an image that it was willing and also had the capability to help its neighbors when they were in trouble. More recently, Beijing provided over \$10 million to the government of Burma to assist with reconstruction in areas that were devastated by Cyclone Nargis in 2008.⁶⁹

Managing key bilateral ties in the region is also showing China's responsibilities for peace in Asia. Relationships between China and its key counterparts of the United States, Japan, and Taiwan will exert a crucial influence on the stability and security in the region; they will also determine the degree and success of the formation of an Asian regional community. A key question is how to deal with the linkage between US concerns and the interests of every member of such a grouping. In recent years, China has been involved in a variety of Sino-US dialogues and mechanisms. Then China tries its best to find shared values and identity with Japan in the building of an East Asia Community. China's maneuvers in those intertwined relations would facilitate not only its national interests but regional stability as well. As to Taiwan, China's policy is characterized by a combination of hard power and soft power. China launched a charm offensive against the politicians and people in the island by inviting opposition party leaders to visit the mainland, extending tuition benefits to Taiwanese studying at mainland universities, and, through a zero-tariff policy on imports of Taiwan's fruits, offering incentive perks to farmers in the south of Taiwan (traditionally a pro-Taiwan independence stronghold).⁷⁰ Now through the ongoing negotiations over the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA), China would like to meet the interests of many people across the straits.

VI. Evaluation of China's diplomatic soft power

Both hard power and soft power are responsible for China's rising influence in Asia. China's increasing role has benefited from the missteps by the U.S. and Japan, ranging from the response to the financial crisis to the policies after 9/11. But the rising influence also stems from China's soft power in Asia-that is, China's ability to influence Asian countries by persuasion rather than coercion. This growing

68 Joshua Kurlantzick, "China's Charm: Implications of Chinese Soft Power," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Policy Brief, No. 47, 2006.

69 Pang Zhongying, "Playing By the Rules? China's Growing Global Role," Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus, 2008. <japanfocus.org/_Pang_Zhongying-Playing_By_the_Rules_China_s_Growing_Global_Role_ >

70 Bates Gill and Yanzhong Huang, "Sources and Limits of China's Soft Power", Survival, Vol. 48, No. 2, Summer 2006, pp. 17-36.

attractiveness comes from a lot of things like the Chinese culture, political values, foreign policy, economic opportunities, and human resources.⁷¹ As a result, it is hard to argue that China's soft power had not been on an upward curve. Part of the reason is that China started from a very low base. To its neighbors it had been a menace during the Mao era, fomenting revolution and instability in the region. And to the rest of the world it had been a stranger: unaligned and uninterested for many decades. The combination of skillful diplomacy and the luster of thirty years of double-digit growth had allowed China to turn these perceptions around.⁷² It is difficult to decipher whether other Asian countries' aversion or attraction towards China is stemmed from China's hard power or soft power. Since soft power is a very abroad concept, in evaluating the soft power of China's foreign policy, this paper mainly looks at China's self-perceptions and other countries' perceptions towards China's soft power through using some focused surveys, public opinion poll results and some other information.

China's self-perception

There is noticeable evidence that Chinese governments at all level have aware and appreciated the significance of soft power. Indications of this can be found in many speeches given by government officials in different contexts. The country's experience with economic progress accumulated over the last three decades since it embarked on the road of reform and opening up in the late 1970s and its ideas on peaceful development are attractive to the developing world. Generally speaking, it is believed that China's soft power is enhanced by diplomacy and wins global admiration.⁷³ In fact, the successful strengthening of Asian-China relations, despite historical animosities and some recent economic concerns can be attributed to China's successful political, economic and cultural cultivation of Asians. China's soft influence has risen substantially in Southeast Asia; at the close of the annual National People's Congress and Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference sessions in Beijing in 2004, Premier Wen Jiabao described China as a friendly elephant.⁷⁴ Ruan Zongze, the deputy

71 There are research institutes extended the concept of soft power into five aspects like economic, cultural, human capital, diplomatic, and political soft power. See Christopher B. Whitney & David Shambaugh: *Soft Power in Asia: Result of a 2008 Multinational Survey of Public Opinion*, the Chicago Council in partner ship with East Asia Institution. Asia Soft Power Survey 2008.

72 Mark Leonard, *What Does China Think?* New York: PublicAffairs, 2008, p. 98.

73 "Nation Shifts to New Diplomatic Posture", <http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2006-11/15/content_5332099.htm>, "China's Soft Power Wins Global Admiration", <http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2007-10/23/content_6928857.htm> "Soft Power Improves Fast", <http://news.xinhuanet.com/world/2006-12/22/content_5521793.htm> "Soft power's reach depends on friendly Internet Source," By Li Xiguang, *Global Times*, November 02 2010, <<http://opinion.globaltimes.cn/commentary/2010-11/588597.html>>, "Soft Power Push," *Global Times*, October 28, 2010, <<http://china.globaltimes.cn/society/2010-10/586830.html>>

74 "Solidifying China's Regional Partnership", <http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2004-05/17/content_1473125.htm>

director of the Institute of China's International Studies (ICIS), said that China's diplomatic practices in recent years showed the role of soft power, which supported its growing influence worldwide.⁷⁵ "The ascent of China's cultural influence reflects clearly the rise of China's soft power," said He Chuanqi, director of the China Center for Modernization Research under the Chinese Academy of Sciences.⁷⁶ The Chinese government appears to be confident in the investment they put in the soft power building programs. There is no statement indicating Chinese officials think that their programs are unsuccessful.⁷⁷ According to the official *People's Daily*, "Sponsoring the Bo'ao Forum for Asia and hosting the 6-party talks on the Korean nuclear issue both were the loudest voice made by China on the global stage."⁷⁸ China's *Xinhua News Agency* also published an article stating that China is a responsible great power on international and diplomatic stages with its soft power ever increasing.⁷⁹ Xu Lin, the director of the Confucius Institute headquarters said, "Considered as a channel of spreading Chinese culture around the world, the Confucius Institute is also a demonstration of China's rising soft power."⁸⁰

In the academic circles, only a minority of domestic scholars hold optimistic views on China's soft power.⁸¹ The dominant view among Chinese interlocutors on the current state of China's soft power is that China has made much headway and has great potential, but its soft power lags behind both its own hard power growth and that of the soft power of other major powers, particularly the United States.⁸² Although there is the noted gap in the scholarly community, most Chinese are confident in their nation's diplomatic soft power, as evident in a professional survey on soft power in Asia conducted by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs. This survey showed a huge perception gap between China's self-perception and that of others regarding China's soft power. Most Chinese are giving a higher rating towards their diplomatic soft power. Their view is probably based on their nation's thirty years of achievement, which make them more and more confident in their growth, their posi-

75 "Soft Power Improves Fast", <http://news.xinhuanet.com/world/2006-12/22/content_5521793.htm>

76 "How to Improve China's Soft Power", <<http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/90785/6916487.html>>

77 Interview with Professor Edward Chow, CSIS, Washington D.C., January 25, 2010.

78 "How to Improve China's Soft Power", <<http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/90785/6916487.html>>

79 "2006: Soft Power Constructs the New Diplomatic Structure," <http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2006-12/22/content_5521754.htm>

80 "Confucius Institutions Short of Teaching Materials" <http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-12/13/content_12640967.htm>

81 Pang Zhongying, "Kongzi Sixiang de Chukou he Ruanliliang de Shiyong" (The Export of Confucianism and Use of Soft Power), *Shijie Zhishi* (World knowledge), No.17, 2006, p. 67.

82 Zhan Yijia, "Zhongguo shi ruanshili Daguo ma" (Is China a Nation with Strong Soft Power), *Shijie Zhishi* (World Knowledge), No. 20, 2006, p. 5; Deng Xiancao, "Xiaoran Jueqi de Zhongguo Ruanshili" (Chinese Soft Power Quietly Growing), *Pandeng* (Ascent), No. 6, 2005, pp. 89-93; "Touxu Zhongguo Ruanshili" (Analizing China's Soft Power), *Jiefang Ribao* (Liberation Daily), October 3, 2005; Meng Honghua, "Zhongguo Ruanshili Pinggu Baogao" (Assessment and Report of China's Soft Power), *Guoji Guancha* (International Observer), No. 2, 2007.

tion, and their influence in the region today.

Others' perception of China's soft power

China's soft power aroused mixed responses from its Asian neighbors. Some are of the view that China's soft power in Asia is rising and will be beneficial to the rest of the region, while others do not share such a positive idea towards China and have concerns regarding its soft power. Here, we will look at some polling data, along with other information that is indicative of China's popularity in the region, in part because popularity is "a good first approximation of both how attractive a country appears and the costs that are incurred by unpopular policies."⁸³

According to BBC World Service poll, from 2005 to 2009, the positive view towards China's influence in the world is on a declining trend. Compared with the world average of 48 percent positive view in 2005, this figure slipped to 41 percent in 2009. Accordingly, the five years witnessed 8 percent increasing negative view towards China from 30 percent in 2005 to 38 percent in 2009. Among Asian neighbors, China has a relatively positive view in Southeast Asian countries especially in Indonesia, Philippines and Thailand compared to its positive view in Japan, South Korea, and the US. But the tendency of the poll indicates that the positive view is on a downward trend. Indonesia's positive view towards China's influence in the world drastically decreased 25 point (with 68 percent positive view in 2005 to 43 percent in 2009). This time period also saw a decreasing positive by 15 point in Philippines. Both Japan and South Korea's negative views towards China's global influence is ascending. In 2009, Japan's negative view towards China rose to 38 percent with only 18 percent positive. South Korea's positive view toward China decreased by 15 point while negative view increased by 14 point. In all these polls, majority countries' positive view outweighed the negative; it is mainly found in countries in Middle East and Africa. Another poll, this one part of the Pew Global Attitudes Project, also found deterioration in the image of China in the world between 2005 and 2007. In Asia, China favorability trend is declining in countries like Japan, South Korea, India, and Russia.⁸⁴ However, in all these polls from 2007 to 2009, Chinese have a very optimistic view on the country's international influence around the world, with 90, 92, and 81 percent positive view respectively in 2007, 2008, and 2009, ranking the highest compared to other countries' self perceptions.⁸⁵

Public opinion is very ephemeral. According to some recent focused surveys on

83 Joseph.S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, 2004, p.125.

84 Pew Global Attitudes Project, "Global Unease with Major World Powers," released in June 17, 2007. <<http://pewglobal.org/2007/06/27/global-unease-with-major-world-powers/>>

85 <<http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/>>

China's soft power, by looking at how citizens of Southeast Asian countries view a rising China, it was found that China's soft power was far from dominating the region. Southeast Asians in general view China positively, giving China a slightly better image than the United States, but they viewed Japan more positively than China.⁸⁶ Another new study by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs (CCGA) and the East Asia Institute (EAI) produced much counter-intuitive results and negative findings. In terms of soft power in Asia--the ability to wield influence by indirect, nonmilitary means, whether by persuasion or attraction--China ranks well below the United States in the estimation of most of the Asians surveyed.⁸⁷ The survey showed that China still lagged far behind the main actors in Asia, especially the United States and Japan in the key areas of soft power, including economics, culture, human capital, diplomacy and politics. Strong majorities in South Korea, Japan, and the United States, as well as a plurality in Indonesia were worried that China could become a military threat in the future. A majority in the region still did not want to exclude the U.S. presence in Asia. Virtually all of the Asians surveyed want the United States to stay engaged in the region on a more sustained and high levels. As some analysts predicted, China's hard power use made its neighbors move closer to the United States and echoed the "China threat" rhetoric.⁸⁸ Some other survey also showed that China's co-optive behavior in Asian has not assure its neighbors; most of them still think China is a potential military threat in the region. It revealed that even though the Chinese government are investing enormously in propaganda resources and popularizing the concept of a harmonious world, their investments have not paid off well in Asia.⁸⁹ On the diplomatic dimension in terms of problem-solving, policy promoting, leadership in international institutions, trust-building and cooperation, humanitarian assistance, and respecting sovereignty, etc., China received lower ratings from its neighbors compared with ratings of other countries.

These surveys may sound an alarm for China's ongoing efforts to build up its soft power in the region. As Nye stated, soft power can be applied directly toward elites and indirectly toward the masses. The former opinion poll showed that the Chinese government is seen as conducting an unbalanced foreign policy, playing too much games with higher politics and failing to win the hearts and minds of ordinary people in the region. As GlobeScan Chairman Doug Miller commented, "Our poll re-

86 Wang Zhengxu and Yang Ying, "Is China's Soft Power Dominating Southeast Asia? Views from the Citizens," the University of Nottingham, China Policy Institute, October 2008.

87 Chicago Council on Global Affairs, "Asia Soft Power Survey 2008 - Soft Power in Asia: Results of a 2008 Multinational Survey of Public Opinion," p. 2, <http://www.thechicagocouncil.org/dynamic_page.php?id=75>

88 Jingdong Yuan, "Chinese Perspective on US-Japan Alliance," in David Arase and Tsuneo Akaha, eds., *The US-Japan Alliance: Balancing Soft and Hard Power in East Asia*, London: Routledge, 2010.

89 "Soft Power in East Asia," The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington DC, June 17, 2008.

sults suggest that China has much to learn about winning hearts and minds in the world.”⁹⁰

VII. Implications of China's Soft Power Diplomacy for Asian Regional Cooperation

A close look at China's ideas, institutions, and responsibilities revealed a modified posture in China's foreign behaviors that is characterized by co-optive efforts. Through promoting appealing ideas, China tries to strike a resonant chord with other Asian countries and peoples. Many aspects of China's foreign policy which substantiate its soft power are increasingly convergent with approaches advocated by the vast majority of the international community.⁹¹ This is particularly the case in ASEAN, where China's initiatives dovetail very closely with ASEAN's own normative approaches to cooperative security and conflict management. This ideational agreement must precede the formation of institutional architectures; and once norms are institutionalized, they can become binding on member states.⁹² By providing foreign aid and showing responsible behavior, China can induce active cooperation from its neighbors and have them enjoy the resulting peace dividends in support of their domestic development. Through multilateralism China is helping the process of trust building and cooperation development to jointly solve regional hot issues. China's participation in multilateralism has deepened political trust and strengthened cooperation between China and its neighbors. China's co-optive behavior has changed the regional context, producing a blizzard of meetings and exchanges among Chinese officials and their counterparts, both civilian and military, in neighboring countries.⁹³ The Bo'ao Forum for Asia, held annually in Hainan Province, attracts a thousand business and political grandees from across Asia to network and discuss the region's future. China's active role has increased the frequency of interactions among Asian countries over common concerns and interests, providing better information about the benign nature of further cooperation in East Asia.⁹⁴ Those transnational dialogues have helped to develop a pan-Asian identity among Asian countries, resulting in solidarity among East Asian members. Without China's embrace of regional multilateralism, Asian cooperation could not have come into being in the early 2000s. At the regional level, the rise of new cooperative mechanisms would be an important step forward for an Asian regional integration project.

90 <http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/articles/views_on_countriesregions_bt/588.php?lb=btvoc&pnt=588&nid=&id=>

91 Bates Gill and Yanzhong Huang, "Sources and Limits of China's Soft Power," *Survival*, Vol. 48, No. 2, Summer 2006, pp. 17-36.

92 David Shambaugh, "China Engages: Reshaping the Regional Order," *International Security*, Vol. 29, No. 3 2004, pp. 64-99.

93 Ibid.

94 Injoo Sohn, "Learning to Co-operate: China's Multilateral Approach to Asian Financial Co-operation," *The China Quarterly*, 2008.

At the global level, the development of Asian regional cooperation would help to increase the autonomy and bargaining power of East Asia vis-à-vis the rest of the world.

Soft power is not limited to states; it also applies to regions, organizations and even individuals. China's soft power should be part of Asia's soft power. Traditionally, Asian countries had impressive potential resources for soft power. The arts, fashion, and cuisine of Asia's ancient cultures have had a strong impact on other parts of the world for centuries.⁹⁵ And today, the ongoing active Asian cooperation and integration process also have attracted a lot of outside participants and observers. As Indonesia's president in his opening remarks at the Congress of the 4th Asian Parliamentary Assembly (APA) said, "The different Asia is a region with full of partnership network and tolerance, peaceful and prosper region and a territory that becomes the world's growth hub." Dramatic economic growth in China and the various networks in Asia are the beginning of what some refer to as the "Asian century."⁹⁶ In Asia, the cooperative process driven by ASEAN, the open regionalism, and the flexible institutionalism constitutes Asia's soft power.⁹⁷ Asia should make the 21st century a "soft power era" to make a "different Asia," according to the Indonesian President.⁹⁸

Looking back at the style and substance of China's foreign policy, it is not difficult to find that China's soft power building is compatible with Asian regional cooperation. China advocates that the East Asia Summit (EAS) should be open and inclusive and that the United States is a very important country and an important partner of East Asia.⁹⁹ China has respected the host role of ASEAN and seeks no leadership in the regional community. The advantage of Chinese soft power is that it, along with the desire to improve China's national interests, also seeks to establish harmonious, non-conflicting relationship with other civilizations that certainly contribute to the strengthening of international stability, security and mutual understanding.¹⁰⁰

Whether East Asia would be connected through soft power and other activities remains a problem, but China's soft power is bound to have a part in Asia. Soft power diplomacy which advocates strategies of gaining appreciation, trust, and friendship, rather than muscular dominance would facilitate the larger scope and extent of re-

95 V.R. Raghavan, "Soft Power in the Asia Pacific," <www.delhipolicygroup.com/pdf/soft_power_in_asia_pacific.pdf>

96 "Asia Should Make 21st Century a Soft Power Era: Indonesian President," <http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-12/08/content_12610695.htm>

97 Yang Luhui and Guo Yanjun, "China's Soft Power Strategy in East Asia Cooperation," International Forum, Vol. 10, No.2 March 2008, pp.42-46.

98 "Asia Should Make 21st Century a 'Soft Power Era': Indonesian President," <http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-12/08/content_12610695.htm>

99 "Overcoming Obstacles to East Asia Community," <http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2007-01/16/content_5612470.htm>

100 Gulnara Karimova, "Application of 'Soft Power' Strategy on Asian Civilization Spaces," Contemporary International Relations (in English), Vol. 19, No 6, November/December 2009, pp.34-56.

gional cooperation because soft power is not a zero-sum game in which one country's gain is necessarily another country's loss.¹⁰¹ If China and other Asian countries, for example, become more attractive in each other's eyes and both adopt more co-optive behavior, the prospects of integration would be produced. It is said that the key for the peaceful and prosperous Asia's future lies on the capacity to build and spread "soft power."¹⁰²

VIII. Conclusion: Limits and Prospects of China's Soft Power

China's exercise of soft power on the foreign policy front is not without constraints and challenges, not only from its endorsement of soft power resources and its capability of power conversion, but also from the changing Asian context. Firstly, on the foreign policy front, China has no well-designed soft power strategy and is very reactive,¹⁰³ and its foreign policy is affected by the cultural attractiveness and the examples set by its domestic policies. In political terms, democratic countries tend to discount China's soft power as long as China represents the "other" group identity that cannot be reconciled with their own identity.¹⁰⁴ Secondly, when converting its resources into desired outcomes, China would be continuously burdened by its culture and history. Although China and other Asians share much in terms of culture and traditional values, the different modernization processes they have experienced have kept them distant from each other. The governments in Asia remain wary of China. Most Asian government officials carefully calculate their nations' interests as they endeavor to channel Chinese behavior in constructive ways while seeking offsetting linkages with the US, Japan, India, and others. They are not persuaded that China's rise is uniquely beneficial.¹⁰⁵ And China still has many unresolved hot issues with its neighbors; soft power can hardly avoid the "hard facts" in Taiwan Strait, in Sentaku Island, and in the South China Sea. These issues may well reinforce the China threat perception and lead to more coercive security policies at home. Along with Beijing's soaring military expenditure, many Asians are worried that China could become a military threat in the future.¹⁰⁶

101 Joseph S. Nye and Wang Jisi, "Hard Decisions on Soft Power Opportunities and Difficulties for Chinese Soft Power," *Harvard International Review*, Summer 2009. <<http://hir.harvard.edu/agriculture/hard-decisions-on-soft-power> >

102 "Asia Should Make 21st Century a "Soft Power Era": Indonesian President," <http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-12/08/content_12610695.htm>

103 Bonnie Glaser and Melissa Murphy, "Soft Power with Chinese Characteristics, the Ongoing Debate," in Carola McGiffert, ed., *Chinese Soft Power Implications for the United States: Competition and Cooperation in the Developing World. A Report of the CSIS Smart Power Initiative*, Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, March 2009, pp.10-26.

104 Sook Jong Lee, "China's Soft Power: Its Limits and Potentials," EAI Issue Briefing, No. MASI, July 2009, pp. 1-11.

105 Consultation with Professor Robert Sutter, Washington D.C., January 28, 2010. Also see Robert Sutter, *China's Rise in Asia: Promise, Prospects, and Implications for the US*, Asia-Pacific Centre for Security Studies, February 2005.

106 Christopher B. Whitney and David Shambaugh "Soft Power in Asia: Result of a 2008 Multinational Survey of Public Opinion," the Chicago Council in partner ship with East Asia Institution, Asia Soft Power Survey 2008.

This study has found that in comparison with other major powers the post-1949 China was far more likely to use violence in a dispute over military-security issues such as over territory.¹⁰⁷ To pursue a coherent and conciliatory foreign policy is crucial for advancing a benign and attractive image toward its neighbors and around the world. However, those moment-to-moment issues have often disrupted Beijing by its rising nationalism sentiments. The closed nationalism is hurting China's soft power.¹⁰⁸ Last but not least, the changing Asian context will challenge China's soft power wielding, adding uncertainties for China in translating its soft power resources into desired goals. How the major powers respond to China's ascending influence in the region will be a major factor shaping the stability of East Asia.¹⁰⁹ As each country is building its soft power in competition for an advantageous role in the cooperation process, China's soft power is unlikely to be appreciated by all Asians in that the regionalism in Asia now is "competitiveness and amplified nationalism."¹¹⁰ Therefore, China's capability of building soft power will be continuously under careful scrutiny. The findings in American Enterprise Institute and National Defense University published in 2006 showed that while attentive Chinese diplomacy has alleviated regional fears, China's long-term ambitions remain a concern for many countries.¹¹¹ In terms of regional economic integration, the fear of a China-dominated East Asia has provoked measures to hedge against China, such as the East Asia Summit that brought in India, Russia, and Australia.¹¹²

In his book *the Paradox of American Power*, Nye identifies what kind of countries would best succeed in projecting soft power in the current age. Successful countries are those whose dominant culture and ideas are closer to prevailing norms, whose credibility is enhanced by their domestic and international performances, and who have most access to multiple channels of communication and thus more influence over how issues are framed.¹¹³ China does not fit this model so well and it appears still trudging an up-hill road in projecting soft power. Even if China's soft power has been

107 Alastair Iain Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995, p. 256.

108 Interview with Professor David M. Lampton. Washington DC, January 27. See also, Bates Gill and Yanzhong Huang, "Sources and Limits of China's Soft Power," *Survival*, Vol. 48, No. 2, Summer 2006, pp. 17-36.

109 Robert Sutter, *Chinese Foreign Relations, Power and policy Since the Cold War*, Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008.

110 Yang Luhui and Guo Yanjun, "China Soft Power Strategy in East Asia Cooperation," *International Forum*, Vol.10, No.2 March 2008, pp.42-46; and Pang Zhongying, "Regionalization, Regionality and Regionalism: On Regionalism in East Asia," *World Politics and Economy*, 2003, No. 11, pp.42-47.

111 Robert Sutter and Chin-Hao Huang, "China-Southeast Asia Relations: Military Diplomacy and China's Soft Power," *Comparative Connections*, A Quarterly E-Journal on East Asian Bilateral Relations, pp.75-81.

112 For the East Asia Summit, see Mohan Malik, "The East Asia Summit: More Discord than Accord," *YaleGlobal*, December 20, 2005, <<http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/east-asia-summit-more-discord-accord>>

113 Joseph Nye, *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World's Only Superpower Cannot Go It Alone*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 69.

turning more positive in some Southeast Asia countries, there is no getting better tendency in industrial countries like in Japan, South Korea, the United States, and some EU countries. China has a long way to go to win the soft power competition. And although the soft power-based foreign policy has gradually gained prominence in China over the past decade, developing hard power is still a major component in strengthening China's comprehensive national power. As some scholars point out, while soft power is important, overemphasizing it will negatively impact foreign and domestic policy. If we don't focus on developing our hard power, we won't be able to build our soft power.¹¹⁴ In that sense, it may be argued that China, like the United States, aims at becoming a "smart power," a power that complements its economic and military weight with great investments in soft power.¹¹⁵

Reference

- Alastair Iain Johnston and Robert S. Ross, *New Directions in the Study of China's Foreign Policy*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California 2006
- David Lampton, *The Three Faces of Chinese Power, Might, Money, and Minds*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, University of California Press, 2008.
- David Arase and Tsuneo Akaha edited, *The U.S.-Japan Alliance: Balancing Soft and Hard Power in East Asia*, Routledge 2009.
- David Shambaugh, "Power Shift: China and Asia's New Dynamics", Edited, University of California Press, 2005.
- Inderjeet Parmar and Michael Cox edited, *Soft Power and US Foreign Policy, Theoretical, Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, London and New York, 2010.
- Joseph S. Nye, *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*, Basic Books, 1990.
- Joseph S. Nye, *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World's Only Superpower Cannot Go it Alone*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Joseph S. Nye, *Soft power: the Means to Success in World Politics*, Public Affairs, New York 2005.
- Joshua Kurlantzick, *Charm Offensive: How China's Soft Power is Transforming the World? A New Republic Book*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2007.

114 "Soft Power Shouldn't Be Overemphasized," *Global Times*, June 29, 2009, <<http://opinion.globaltimes.cn/editor-picks/2009-06/440825.html>>

115 Ingrid D'Hooghe, "The Limits of China's Soft Power in Europe: Beijing's Public Diplomacy Puzzle," January 2010, Netherlands Institute of International Relations, "Clingendael".

- Mark Leonard, *What Does China Think?* PublicAffairs, A Member of the Perseus Books Group, 2008.
- Meng Honghua, *China's Soft Power Strategy*, Zhenjiang People Press, Dec, 2007.
- Marc Lanteigne, *Chinese Foreign Policy: An Introduction*, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group Landon and New York 2009.
- Niu Jun, *China's Diplomacy in the Post Cold War Years*, Series of World Politics, Peking University Press, March 2009.
- Yong Deng and Fei-Ling Wang, *In the Eye of the Dragon: China Views the World*, Roman & Littlefield Publisher, Inc. 1999.
- Sujian Guo and Jean-Marc F. Blanchard, "Harmonious World" and China's New Foreign Policy, Lexington Books, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. 2008.
- Sujian Guo and Shiping Hua edited, *New Dimensions of Chinese Foreign Policy*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. 2007.
- Susan L. Shirk, *China: Fragile Superpower*, Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Robert Sutter, *Chinese Foreign Relations, Power and Policy since the Cold War*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. 2008.
- Watanabe Yasushi and David L. McConnell edited, *Soft Power Superpowers: Cultural and National Assets of Japan and the United States*, 2008.
- Interview with Akaha Tsuneo by the author, January 21 2010.
- Interview with Edward Chow by the author, January 25 2010.
- Interview with Bonnie Glaser by the author, January 26 2010.
- Interview with David M. Lampton by the author, January 27 2010.
- Interview with Robert Sutter by the author, January 28 2010.